

REMARKS

In the Office Action, claims 14-20 were withdrawn, and claims 1-13 and 21 were rejected. By this Reply and Amendment, claims 1 and 21 have been amended, and claims 1-13 and 21 remain pending in the present application. All claim amendments are fully supported throughout the written description and figures of the specification.

Claims 1-21 were subject to a restriction requirement requiring the election of either claims 1-13 and 21 or claims 14-20. During a telephone conversation between the Examiner and Jaime A. Castano on March 23, 2005, a provisional election was made to prosecute the invention of Group I (claims 1-13 and 21). The election is hereby affirmed.

Claims 1-7, 12-13 and 21 were rejected under 35 USC 102(b) as anticipated by the Whitlock et al. reference, US Patent No.: 6,006,829. Independent claims 1 and 21 have been amended to clarify certain aspects of the invention, and those claims, along with their dependent claims, are believed patentably distinct over the cited reference.

The Whitlock et al. reference discloses a filter for use in subterranean environments. The filter includes an inner support member 10 and a filter body 20. Inner support member 10 is a hollow tubular member that permits fluid flow into its hollow center. (See column 3, lines 38-67). Filter body 20 includes at least one filtering layer 23. The filtering layers 23 are formed of a sintered supported porous stainless steel filter medium wrapped about inner support member 10. According to the disclosure, the filter layers 23 may instead be in the form of a pleated composite. (See column 5, lines 38-56).

However, the Whitlock et al. reference does not disclose or suggest various aspects of the pending claims. For example, the reference does not disclose or suggest a mesh medium having interlocking layers of mesh material where the interlocking layers are "connected by pressing a plurality of fibers from an individual interlocking layer into the next adjacent interlocking layer" as recited in amended, independent claim 1. Similarly, the Whitlock et al. reference does not disclose or suggest a mesh medium having interlocking layers of mesh material in combination

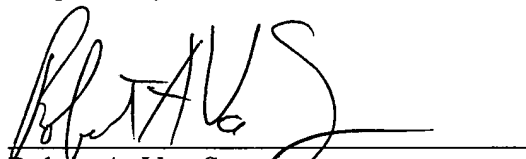
with a piece of equipment having "at least one intelligent completion device which the mesh medium at least partially encloses" as recited in amended, independent claim 21.

Claims 2-7 and 12-13 ultimately depend from amended, independent claim 1 and are patentable for the reasons provided above with respect to claim 1 as well as for the unique subject matter recited in these dependent claims. Accordingly, claims 1-7, 12-13 and 21 are believed patentable over the cited reference.

Claims 8-11 were rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as unpatentable over the Whitlock et al. reference in view of the Schulte reference, US Patent No.: 6,237,780. Claims 8-11 ultimately depend from amended, independent claim 1 and are patentable for the reasons provided above with respect to independent claim 1, as well as for the unique subject matter recited in each of these dependent claims. The Schulte reference discloses screen configurations for a vibratory separator, but the reference does not obviate the deficiencies of disclosure in the Whitlock et al. reference. Accordingly, claims 8-11 are patentably distinguishable over the cited references.

In view of the foregoing remarks, the pending claims are believed patentable over the cited references. However, if the Examiner believes certain amendments are necessary to clarify the present claims or if the Examiner wishes to resolve other issues by way of a telephone conference, the Examiner is kindly invited to contact the undersigned attorney at the telephone number indicated below.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robert A. Van Someren', is written over a horizontal line.

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